

III. Rise of the Roman Empire

A. Conquest of Italy (390-272 BC)

1. After conquering Etruria and central Italy, the Romans had a terrible setback c.390 BC as they confronted the Gauls of northern Italy. The Gauls sacked the city of Rome and destroyed the Twelve Tables.
2. As bad as this outcome was, it was a turning point because Rome would never be sacked again for precisely 800 years!
3. The Romans then concentrated on southern Italy. Tarentum, the main Greek city in southern Italy, asked for help from the Greek homeland. The only city-state willing to assist was Epirus, led by its king Pyrrhus (a cousin of Alexander the Great).
4. Pyrrhus crossed over to Italy with a formidable army, including 20 war elephants brought back to Greece from Asia.
5. The first battle against the Romans was a Greek victory but the cost of the battle was so high that Pyrrhus exclaimed, “*Another such victory and I shall be ruined!*”
6. Historians have called this type of victory – which is almost as bad as a loss – a “Pyrrhic victory.”
7. Sure enough, after another such win, Pyrrhus' forces were so weakened that he lost the next battle and the war. Rome now ruled over all of Italy south of Gaul.

B. Managing the Conquered Territory

1. Like the Persians, the Romans expected taxes and soldiers from the people they conquered.
2. What was different about Rome, however, was that it was a *republic*, and since its government included the idea of protecting peoples' rights, the Romans needed to decide if they were going to protect the rights of the people they had conquered.
3. They decided to make their allies earn this protection.
 - a) Conquered cities in Italy were each made into a “municipium.”
 - b) This gave the people of those cities the right to self-government, as long as they maintained their loyalty to Rome.
 - c) Municipia only had treaties directly with Rome, and were forbidden from fighting each other. This created the “Pax Romana,” a state of peace (“pax” means “peace” in Latin) and a period of progress.
 - d) In times of war when Rome needed help against a new adversary, the conquered cities would also have to provide troops.
 - e) If they served Rome well, the people of these cities were granted Roman citizenship.
 - f) As Romans, they could travel to Rome to participate in the assemblies, and their own nobles were recognized as Patricians. They also received all the legal protections of Roman citizens.

4. The Romans watched over their allies by means of colonies of Roman citizens scattered throughout the Roman world.
 - a) “Roman colonies” were colonies of Roman citizens, who were granted land from conquered peoples.
 - b) There were also “Latin colonies,” where Rome's allies were given land as a reward, and if they continued to please Rome, they would get full citizenship.
 - c) The whole system was designed to encourage loyalty by the reward of participation in Rome’s republican form of government.

C. The First Punic War (264 – 241 BC)

1. The Punic Wars were wars between Rome and the north African city of Carthage over control of the western Mediterranean.
2. The Carthaginians were colonists from Phoenicia (modern-day Lebanon) who had settled in northern Africa, in what is today Tunisia. Their capital was Carthage, and their empire included Sicily, Corsica, Sardinia, and part of Spain.
3. The “Punic Wars” are known by this name because the Romans called the Phoenicians the “Punici.”
4. The war between them was rooted in the simple cause of rivalry over land.
5. Rome was a great land power and Carthage was a naval power, but early in the war, the Romans discovered the wreck of a Carthaginian war galley (called a “trireme”), which they used as a model in developing their own ships.
6. Since the Romans were used to fighting on land, they added an innovation to their ship design – a swing bridge – which could be used to transfer troops to an enemy vessel once the galley pulled along side. With this innovation, the Romans obtained a slight advantage over the Carthaginians.
7. Over the course of the war, the Romans lost four entire fleets in storms and battles.
8. The fifth fleet finally triumphed and Carthage was forced to relinquish Sicily to the Romans.

D. The Importance of the First Punic War

1. One of the results of the war was that the Romans now had the strongest navy in the Mediterranean. They used it to also take Corsica and Sardinia away from Carthage.
2. Far more important, however, was the change that occurred inside of Rome because of the challenge of incorporating the newly conquered people of Sicily into Rome.
 - a) The Carthaginians were foreigners and the Romans did not like them, so they decided to rule them outright, and deny them a path to Roman citizenship.
 - b) An official called a “propraetor” (see p.47, above) was put in charge. He made sure that taxes and troops were provided to Rome as required.
3. Sicily thus became the first Roman “province.” This meant that the Romans were not going to let its people be a part of the *republic*.